

Dr Syed Aziz Pasha ~ farewell words from Hajj Ahmad Thomson

Dr Syed Aziz Pasha, *alayhi rahma*, was both a pioneer and an ambassador in the way of Allah. I was fortunate to first meet him shortly after I embraced Islam in 1973.

When Dr Pasha first established the Union of Muslim Organisations of UK and Eire Trust (“the UMO”) in 1975, people were legally free to discriminate against Muslims on the grounds of their religion with impunity. In that age some politicians, while declaring publicly that discrimination on the grounds of race was disgraceful, also pretended that religious discrimination simply did not exist.

In this climate Dr Pasha not only struggled with his wealth and his self (using sound arguments and constitutional means) to free Muslims from being treated as second-class citizens, but also sought to have Muslim personal law recognised by the law of the land. If this was possible in the days of the Raj, when England ruled India, he argued, then it should be possible here, where England (and hopefully not the Bank) rules England.

Dr Pasha also sought to educate in the best way those who knew little about Islam or Muslims and who therefore were the unintentional victims of their own ignorance, misconceptions and blind prejudices. Blessed as he was with a keen intellect, a sound knowledge of the Qur’an and the Hadith and above all a sense of humour, it was impossible for anyone except the worst of the various bad opinion tanks which have emerged in the last decade (they do not deserve the epithet ‘think’) to describe Dr Pasha as an extremist. Even before it became fashionable to label all the Irish and all the Muslims as terrorists, Dr Pasha made it abundantly clear that Islam is a middle way, which has nothing to do with terrorism or extremism.

As well as striving to unite the various Muslim communities in the British Isles, Dr Pasha extended the hand of friendship to everyone and showed genuine respect for those who had different beliefs and different ways of understanding life. In the words of Imam Junayd, may Allah be pleased with him, he was like the earth which supports everyone and like the sky which shades everything. I have never heard anyone speak ill of Dr Pasha – and shame on anyone who has or does!

In time other organisations such as the Association of Muslim Lawyers (established in 1995) and the Muslim Council of Britain (established in 1997) assisted in the work that Dr Pasha had begun twenty years earlier – in a spirit of mutual co-operation, not competition. As a result the legal, cultural and religious landscape of the British Isles has changed – and whether people are aware of it or not, this is in no small part due to the efforts of Dr Syed Aziz Pasha and all who have been inspired by him and worked with him to improve the quality of life for everyone living in the British Isles.

We ask Allah to be merciful to Dr Syed Aziz Pasha in his grave, on the Day when accounts fall due, in his crossing the Sirat and in the Garden – and to overlook his mistakes and reward him abundantly for the best of what he did while he was in this world, for, in the words of Allah:

Those who believe and make hijra
and do jihad in the Way of Allah
with their wealth and themselves
have a higher rank with Allah.

They are the ones who are victorious.

(*Qur’an*: 9.20)